The Most Dangerous Game

"**The Most Dangerous Game**", also published as "**The Hounds of Zaroff**", is a short story by Richard Connell,[1] first published in *Collier's* on January 19, 1924, with illustrations by Wilmot Emerton Heitland.[2][3] The story features a big-game hunter from New York City who falls from a yacht and swims to what seems to be an abandoned and isolated island in the Caribbean, where he is hunted by a Russian aristocrat.[4] The story is inspired by the big-game hunting safaris in Africa and South America that were particularly fashionable among wealthy Americans in the 1920s.[5]

The Most Dangerous Game

by Richard Connell

Collier's
THE NATIONAL WEEKLY

The Most Dangerous Game

By Richard Connell

Country	United States
Genre(s)	Adventure fiction
Published in	*Collier's*
Publication type	Periodical
Publication date	January 19, 1924
Text	*The Most Dangerous Game* at Wikisource

The story has been adapted numerous times, most notably as the 1932 RKO Pictures film *The Most Dangerous Game*, starring Joel McCrea and Leslie Banks,[6] and for a 1943 episode of the CBS Radio series *Suspense*, starring Orson Welles.[7] It has been called the "most popular short story ever written in English." Upon its publication, it won the O. Henry Award.[4]

"The Most Dangerous Game" is one of many works that entered the public domain in the United States in 2020.[8]

Plot

Big-game hunter Sanger Rainsford and his friend, Whitney, are traveling to the Amazon rainforest for a jaguar hunt. After a discussion about how they are "the hunters" instead of "the hunted," Whitney goes to bed and Rainsford hears gunshots. He climbs onto the yacht's rail and accidentally falls overboard, swimming to Ship-Trap Island, which is notorious for shipwrecks. On the island, he finds a palatial chateau inhabited by two Cossacks: the owner, General Zaroff, and his gigantic deaf-mute servant, Ivan.[9]

The hunter's sharp eyes stopped before they reached the limb where Rainsford lay tensed for a spring; a smile spread over the brown face

Illustration by Wilmot Emerton Heitland in the January 19, 1924 issue of Collier's.

Zaroff, another big-game hunter, knows of Rainsford from his published account of hunting snow leopards in Tibet. Over dinner, the middle-aged Zaroff explains that although he has been hunting animals since he was a boy, he has decided that killing big-game has become boring for him, so after escaping the Russian Revolution he moved to Ship-Trap Island, which he has rigged with lights that lure passing ships into the jagged rocks that surround it. He takes the survivors captive and hunts them for sport, giving them food, clothing, a knife, and a three-hour head start, and using only a small-caliber pistol for himself. Any captives who can elude Zaroff, Ivan, and a pack of hunting dogs for three days are set free. He reveals that he has won every hunt to date. Captives are offered a choice between being hunted or turned over to Ivan, who once served as official knouter for The Great White Czar. Rainsford denounces the hunt as barbarism, but Zaroff replies by claiming that "life is for the strong." Zaroff is enthused to have another world-class hunter as a companion and, at breakfast, offers to take Rainsford along with him on his next hunt. Rainsford staunchly refuses, disappointing Zaroff who then has another epiphany: he will hunt Rainsford. Zaroff becomes impersonal and lays out the parameters of the game as he would to any captive sailor. He leaves the dining room as Ivan enters with Rainsford's meager gear for this time he'll spend as prey. Realizing he has no way out, Rainsford reluctantly agrees to be hunted. During his head start, Rainsford lays an intricate trail in the forest and then climbs a tree. Zaroff finds him easily, but decides to play with him as a cat would with a mouse, standing underneath the tree Rainsford is hiding in, smoking a cigarette, and then abruptly departing. After the failed attempt at eluding Zaroff, Rainsford builds a Malay man-catcher, a weighted log attached to a trigger. This contraption injures Zaroff's shoulder, causing him to return home for the night, but he shouts his respect for the trap before departing. The next day Rainsford creates a Burmese tiger pit, which kills one of Zaroff's hounds. He sacrifices his knife and ties it to a sapling to make another trap, which kills Ivan when he stumbles into it. To escape Zaroff and his approaching hounds, Rainsford dives off a cliff into the sea; Zaroff, disappointed at Rainsford's apparent suicide, returns home. Zaroff smokes a pipe by his fireplace, but two issues keep him from attaining peace of mind: the difficulty of replacing Ivan and the uncertainty of whether Rainsford perished in his dive.

Zaroff locks himself in his bedroom and turns on the lights, only to find Rainsford waiting for him; he had swum around the island in order to sneak into the chateau without the dogs finding him. Zaroff congratulates him on winning the "game," but Rainsford decides to fight him, saying he is still a beast-at-bay and that the original hunt is not over. Accepting the challenge, a delighted Zaroff says that the loser will be fed to the dogs, while the winner will sleep in the bed and then challenges Rainsford to a duel to the death. Then the story abruptly concludes later

that night by stating that Rainsford enjoyed the comfort of Zaroff's bed, implying that he won the duel.

Real-life parallels

In 1976, Hayes Noel, Bob Gurnsey, and Charles Gaines discussed Gaines's recent trip to Africa and his experiences hunting African buffalo. Inspired in part by Gaines's memories and in part by "The Most Dangerous Game", they created paintball in 1981.[10]

There is a possible reference to "The Most Dangerous Game" in letters that the Zodiac Killer wrote to newspapers in the San Francisco Bay Area in his three-part cipher: "Man is the most dangerous animal of all to kill," though he may have come up with the idea independently.[11] The 1932 film version of *The Most Dangerous Game* is mentioned a number of times in the 2007 film, *Zodiac*, a fictionalised depiction of the Zodiac Killer.[12]

The story first appeared in the January 19, 1924 issue of Collier's.

Adaptations

Citations

1. Dixon, Wheeler Winston (August 24, 2010). A History of Horror (https://books.google.com/books?id=w6SLIi8OvTYC&pg=PA42) . Rutgers University Press. p. 42. ISBN 9780813550398.
2. The illustrator, Wilmot Emerton Heitland, is given in the January 19, 1924 issue of Collier's magazine.
3. Ashley, Michael; Ashley, Mike; Contento, William (1995). The Supernatural Index: A Listing of Fantasy, Supernatural, Occult, Weird, and Horror Anthologies (https://books.google.com/books?id=RPrvLFYwm30C&pg=PA179) . Greenwood Publishing Group. p. 179. ISBN 9780313240300.
4. Thompson T.W (2018). "A tale of two centuries: Richard connells "The most dangerous game" ". Midwest Q. Midwest Quarterly. **59** (3): 318–330. ISSN 0026-3451 (https://www.worldcat.org/issn/0026-3451) . OCLC 7665713791 (https://www.worldcat.org/oclc/7665713791) .
5. Connell, Richard (2017). "The Most Dangerous Game" (https://web.archive.org/web/20190527011921/https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/91c2/311d44bc16c6f2f50e1fa76a247edf41cdc6.pdf) (PDF). Stories for Men. Short Stories for Students. pp. 88–107. doi:10.4324/9781315130279-7 (https://doi.org/10.4324%2F9781315130279-7) . ISBN 9781315130279. S2CID 36073866 (https://api.semanticscholar.org/CorpusID:36073866) . Archived from the original (https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/91c2/311d44bc16c6f2f50e1fa76a247edf41cdc6.pdf) (PDF) on May 27, 2019.
6. Hall, Mordaunt (November 21, 1932). "Leslie Banks in a Fantastic Tale of a Mad Russian Hunter -- Ann Hoarding's New Film" (https://www.nytimes.com/1932/11/21/archives/leslie-banks-in-a-fantastic-tale-of-a-mad-russian-hunter-ann.html) . The New York Times. ISSN 0362-4331 (https://www.worldcat.org/issn/0362-4331) . Retrieved May 22, 2019.
7. DeForest, Tim (February 10, 2017). Radio by the Book: Adaptations of Literature and Fiction on the Airwaves (https://books.google.com/books?id=8JgZDgAAQBAJ&pg=PA225) . McFarland. p. 225. ISBN 9781476607597.
8. "Public Domain Day 2020 | Duke University School of Law" (https://web.law.duke.edu/cspd/publicdomainday/2020/) . web.law.duke.edu. Retrieved December 20, 2021.
9. Rovin, Jeff (1987). The Encyclopedia of Supervillains. New York: Facts on File. p. 140. ISBN 0-8160-1356-X.
10. Davidson, Steve, et al. The Complete Guide to Paintball, 4–12. Hatherleigh Press, New York. 1999
11. Graysmith, Robert. (2007). Zodiac. New York, NY: Berkley Books. pp. 54–55. ISBN 9780425212189. OCLC 77495268 (https://www.worldcat.org/oclc/77495268) .
12. Graysmith, Robert (2002). Zodiac Unmasked (https://archive.org/details/zodiacunmaskedid00gray_1/page/6) . New York: Berkeley Books. pp. 6, 40, 246–250, 273, 451 (https://archive.org/details/zodiacunmaskedid00gray_1/page/6) . ISBN 978-0-425-21273-8.

General sources

- Senn, Bryan (2013). *The Most Dangerous Cinema: People Hunting People on Film* (https://books.google.com/books?id=9TEFAgAAQBAJ) . Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co. ISBN 9781476613574.

External links

Wikisource has original text related to this article:
The Most Dangerous Game

- "The Most Dangerous Game" (http://www.dukeofdefinition.com/dangerous_game.pdf) by Richard Connell at Duke of Definition: English on the Web
- "The Most Dangerous Game" (https://www.thefreshreads.com/the-most-dangerous-game/) by Richard Connell at The Fresh Reads

Retrieved from "https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=The_Most_Dangerous_Game&oldid=1073904155"

Last edited 1 month ago by 82.7.31.52

WikipediA